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ERASMUS TO SERVATIUS
EPISTLE 290

BY

ARTHUR KAY, *F.R.S.A., F.S.A.*

WITH FIVE FACSIMILES IN COLLOTYPE

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ERASMUS TO SERVATIUS.

EPISTLE 290.[1]

By ARTHUR KAY, *H*.R.S.A., F.S.A.

ERASMUS educated Europe. Three giants were ERASMUS, FROBEN, and HOLBEIN. Surely Erasmus and Froben were the idyllic author and publisher? While Erasmus hurried after knowledge, he did not let wisdom linger, nor did he degenerate into a specialist. His love of, and search for, general knowledge created wisdom. He bestrode the Renaissance, while printing opened the gates of exact knowledge, and "Greece rose from the dead with the New Testament in her hand." Erasmus lived between 1467 and 1536. We do not know the exact date of his birth; it took place about eleven years after the completion of the printing of Gutenberg's Bible. Gutenberg's Bible was finished in 1456; the simple invention of numbering pages did not take place till 1470 in Cologne. If you let your fancy roam, you can realise the difference between collating two manuscripts, and two books properly paginated. The winning of knowledge swept on, and in 1515 there were two printers, unknown to one another, at Alcala and Basle, producing the New Testament.

With Erasmus we use the stepping stones that lead from medievalism to modern thought, although he never quite threw off a quaint, perhaps I might call it decorative, touch of medievalism. He did not hesitate to scourge "half fools who love their bellies more than letters." His friendship with Colet strengthened his love of England, and many a talk had he with him at Oxford in 1499. In this letter which we are discussing to-night Erasmus tells us that he was invited to Scotland.

"Wherever I have lived"—says Erasmus—"(perhaps I shall speak too arrogantly of myself, but I will say the truth) I have been approved by those most approved and praised by those most praised, and there is no country,

[1] Read 10th November 1927.

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whether Spain, or Italy, or England, or Scotland, which has not invited me to its hospitality." This mention of Scotland recalls the friendship of Erasmus at Siena with that Archbishop of St. Andrews who lost his life at Flodden (9th Sept. 1513), and at Paris in 1519 with Hector Boece.

Erasmus believed in church unity and arbitration. He wrote against War, and in favour of Peace. "Dulce bellum inexpertis" was one of his favourite sayings. He wrote "Querela pacis undique gentium ejectae profligataeque." He stood for round-table church councils. Such was the man whom Colet sought to keep in England.

In 1501 he said "I hope to disarm some critics who think it is the highest religion to know nothing of good learning . . . It has long been my cherished wish to cleanse the Lord's Temple of barbarous ignorance, and to adorn it with treasures brought from afar."

The claim I am making for the Epistle laid before you is important. It has been doubted by many, and endeavours to discredit it have been made through the ages. There is no *dated* copy of it in existence until the one published at Ghent in 1536, after the death of Erasmus. An undated version of my copy exists in the library at Trinity College, Dublin. The text of the title is the same as mine, but round the Dublin one is a woodcut border (*see* plate no. 1.)

Size of leaves of the Dublin copy—197 × 146 mm.; of A.K.'s copy—212 × 150 mm.

I hold that the letter before you now—roughly dated by its position in a dated binding—was printed prior, perhaps long prior, to 1526. There is no question that this volume—in its North Italian style of binding and dated 1526,—is of the period as dated. Not only is the owner's name printed on the binding, but he has written it twice in the book itself. The items bound up in the book are in chronological order. The first two date 1500 and 1499, and at the end are pamphlets dated 1524-1525. There appears nothing to make doubt about the intact bound volume as a 1526 whole. Here we have reliable evidence of date for one of the most important letters written by Erasmus. It is surely quite obvious that the monastic orders would do all they could to discredit the authorship of this letter, which is in line with the other work of Erasmus.

I have, as yet, no photograph of the so-called unique print in the Grand Ducal Library at Wolfenbüttel, but it clearly has the same title-page as the

Trinity College, Dublin, copy, and both are by the same printer as mine, which is without the later addition of a woodcut border round the title. I have also, in a contemporary bound volume of German tracts:

|| SERMO/DIVI IOANNIS/CHRYSOSTOMI UR/bis Constantini Archiepi/scopi de Magistratibus & Potestatibus, Interprete/Christophoro Hegen/dorffino. WOLFGANGUS Stockel excussit.||

This title is in a woodcut border with the same arms—reversed—as the Trinity College and Wolfenbüttel prints, but supported by two winged putti in place of two savage men with clubs. The arms are versions of those of Leipzig. The reproduction of my copy of the Epistle printed by, and bearing the colophon of, Valentin Schumann of Leipzig, dated 1520 (*see* plate no. II.), completes the series, and proves who printed all the three Erasmus prints under discussion. We now reach a date 16 years before the alleged first publication at Ghent in 1536, and draw near to the undated epistle by Martinus Dorpius to Erasmus, circulated about 1515 in manuscript—and printed at Louvain in October, 1515—which has a clear bearing on the Epistle of Erasmus to Servatius, with which these notes deal.

NOTES.

The volume, of which a full description follows, was the property of Peter W. Wedelicki, born in the second half of the fifteenth century at Obornik in Prussia. He studied first at Cracow, where he obtained the degrees of philosophy in 1504 and 1512, and subsequently at Padua, where he graduated in Medicine. In 1525 (one year before the date on the binding of this volume) he became Professor of Medicine at Cracow. He is said to have translated several of the works of Hippocrates into Latin. He died in 1542.

Inscriptions on the volume are:

Petri Vedelicii de Obornyki Artiū &
medicine Doctoris
[?] ascriptus loco [? Poseniensi] p. f. [?]
Zielensig. A.D. 1586
Pro loco Vilneñ deputatus est per me
fratrem Leonardum de Siradia ministrum
libri isti 1586
Balgonare.
T. Graeme

Obornik and Zielenzig are both in Prussia, the former being about 18 miles from Posen. Possibly this volume may have been transferred from one church to another in the neighbourhood of Posen, and kept in each for a time. Balgoner, in the parish of Dunning, Perthshire, was given by James, Earl of Tullibardine, to his wife Lilias Drummond on their marriage 1668. This Lilias Drummond was a sister of Anne Drummond, who married Thomas Graeme of Balgowan in 1671. If the name on the title-page is really Balgonare this would indicate that the book was at one time in the possession of the proprietor of Balgonar in Perthshire. Perhaps it belonged to Lilias Drummond and was given by her to her sister or to her brother-in-law.

The arms in the bookplate are those of Dundas, Viscount Melville. The bookplate cannot be earlier than 1802, when the peerage was created in favour of Henry Dundas, the powerful statesman.

It is interesting to note that there is a distant connection between the Graemes and the Melvilles. In 1786 Anne Dundas, daughter of the first Viscount, married Henry Drummond, great-grand-nephew of Anne Drummond, wife of Thomas Graeme of Balgowan.

The volume contains two incunabula and eight pamphlets; the latter are all of extreme rarity, no copy of any of them being possessed by the British Museum. The binding is of North Italian workmanship and has the date 1526. It is of brown leather, stamped and gilt, and has had four ties. On the front side in the centre is a stamped decorated circle, inside it a shield containing a wheel with six spokes and six blades, above and below a winged cherub head. At top: ACTA CONSTAN. ET BA-‖SILIEN. CONSILIORŪ. Below: MDXXVI. Inside, the owner's name is stamped on the binding: D. PETRI VEDELICII DE OB. Stamped and decorated on the other side (*see* plate no. III.) Four blanks, watermarks on the binder's blanks at front and end—an arm and hand with long fingers; the watermarks appear to be at least 180 mm. long.

From the sale of the Lyndoch and Graham library.

1. Acta Concilii generalis Constantiensis. Hagenau, 11 April, 1500.

1ª Title: Acta Scitu dignissima docte‖q3 cōcinnata Constantiensis Concilii celebratissimi. ‖‖ Iacobi Locher philomusi poete z ‖ oratoris laureati: Ordinarij poetic ‖ e studij Ingolstadēsis decatostichon. ‖‖ Ad lectores... END: Dij bene vortant. 111ᵇ COLOPHON: Acta z decreta generalis 5cilij Constañ. diligent' ‖ elaborata z impssa in imperiali oppido Hagenow ‖ p industriū Henricum Gran inibi incolam. Expē ‖ sis Puidi viri Joñis Rynman. Finiunt feliciter ‖ Anno salutis nostre Millesimo q̊ngentesimo. die ‖ xj. mensis Aprilis.

Quarto. a—o^{8} 112 leaves, the last blank. 7^{a}: 36 lines and head-line, 142 (152) × 97 mm. Types: 155, title, headings, head-lines; 8°, text. Hain 5609.

A.K.'s copy 212 × 150 mm. British Museum copy 203 × 144 mm.

2. Decreta Concilii Basiliensis. [Printed at Basel by Jacobus Wolff de Pforzheim, after 1 March, 1499.]

1ª TITLE: Decreta concilij Basiliensis ||| Ad vrbem Basileam epigrama Sebastiani Brant. ||| Concilij decreta tui Basilea videre || [seven elegiac couplets]...112^{a} END:... Datū spoleti Anno incar||natiōis dñice. Millesimoquadringētesimoquadragesimonono. xiiij. || kaleñ. Iulij. Pontificatus nostri Anno tertio. P. de noxeto/ Marcel || lus de ria registrata in camera apl'ice consilij.

Quarto. a—o^{8} 112 leaves. 3^{b}: 43 lines and head-line, 151 (158) × 96 mm. Types: 160, title and first line of each main section; 107, head-lines (session-numbers); 84, headings of main sections, etc.; 71, text. Hain *5605.

A.K.'s copy 212 × 150 mm. British Museum copy 214 × 148 mm.

3. Tractatulus de his qui ad ecclesias confugiunt.

Quarto. a^{4}

1^{a} TITLE: TRACTATVLUS || De his qui ad ecclesias cōfugi- || unt. Et de Judicibus qui in || ecclesia: et eius atrio Ciui- || les vel criminales cau- || sas tractāt: placita te- || nēt: et alia cōtra ī- || munitates Ec- || clesiarum fa || ciunt. 1^{b}—4^{a}, text. 4^{a} END:... in secula Amē. || Impressum in Oppenheim. 4^{b} blank.

4. Erasmus. Epistola qua se excusat cur mutarit monasticam vitam.

Quarto. a^{4}

1^{a} TITLE: Erasmi || Roterodami || Epistola, q̄ se ex- || cusat, cur mu- || tarit mona- || sticā vi- || tam, || item habi- || tum. 1^{b}: Reverendo Patri Ser- || vatio Erasmus S. D. 1^{b}—4^{a}, text. 4^{a} END: Lavs Deo. 4^{b} blank.

For facsimile of title see Publications of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society, vol. XII., plate XI.

5. Pico della Mirandola. Libri de injusta excommunicatione, pro Hieronymi Savonarolae innocentia.

Quarto. a—b^{8}, c^{6} 22 leaves.

1^{a}: ¶ IOANNIS FRANCISCI PICI MIRAN- || DVLAE IN LIBROS DE INIVSTA || EXCOM municatione/ pro Hiero- || nymi Sauonarolæ Innocētia: || Ad Illustrissimum Virum || Herculem Aestensem. || PROEMIUM. ||| [o] PVSCVLVm de iniusta...2^{b}: ¶ LIBER PRIMUS. 22^{b} END:...non || sanus iuret Orestes. || FINIS.

6. Pico della Mirandola. Defensio Savonarolæ.

Quarto. a—b^{8} 16 leaves.

1^{a}: ¶ Defensio Hieronymi Sauonarole Ferrariensis ordinis pre-‖dicatorum aduersus Samuelem cassinensem...16^{a} END:...lumen affatim impertiat. ‖ FINIS DEO GRATIAS. 16^{b} blank; on it a drawing by some old master.

7. Sententia contra Jacobum Peregrinum.

Quarto. A^{4}—B^{2}. 6 leaves.

1^{a} TITLE: Sententia contra Jacobū Pere-‖grinum, Patauieñ. diocesis presbyterum, Lutheranæ ‖haereseos assertorem, lata in urbe Vienneñ. Au-‖striæ, Tertia Septembris. Anno a Christo ‖nato. M.D. XXIIII. ‖‖ Widerrueff herr Jacob Peregri-‖nus briester Passawer bistumbs, *etc.* 1^{b} BEGIN: In caussa inquisitionis...4^{a} END OF LATIN TEXT:...pronuntiantes. 4^{b} (*Gothic*): Ich Jacob Peregrinus Briester...6^{b} END: Tausent fünffhundert vnd vierund-‖tzwaintzig Jar.

8. Sententia contra Joannem Vasel.

Quarto. A—C^{4} 12 leaves.

1^{a} TITLE: Sententia contra Joannē Uasel ‖Nouæ ciuitatis presbyterum: Lutheranæ haereseos ‖assertorem: lata in urbe Vienneñ. Austriæ: ‖Vltima Septembris. Anno a Christo ‖nato. M.D. XXIIII. ‖‖ Widerruff Hans Uasel brie-‖ster von der Newenstat, *etc.* 1^{b} BEGIN: In caussa inquisitionis...8^{a} END OF LATIN TEXT:... pronunciantes. 8^{b} (*Gothic*): Ich Joannes Uesel briester...11^{b} END OF RECANTATION: ...gestrafft werden möge. 12^{a} (*Roman*): Ita promitto ego Joannes Væsel me pariturum sententiæ ‖contra me late & suprascriptæ Reuocationi, q3 manu mea ‖propria attestor. 12^{b} blank.

9. Sententia contra Casparum Thauber.

Quarto. A^{4}—B^{2} 6 leaves.

1^{a} TITLE: Sententia lata contra Casparū ‖Thauber ciuem Vienneñ. olim Lutheranæ ‖sectæ imitatorem. ‖‖ Widerrueff etlicher verdambter ‖yrtung mit vrtayl vnd recht auff-‖gelegt vnd erkant zu Wien ‖in Osterreych. 1^{b} BEGIN: In causa inquisitionis...4^{a} END OF LATIN TEXT:...pronunciantes. 4^{b} (*Gothic*): Ich Caspar Thauber Burger...6^{a} END OF RECANTATION:...mit meiner ‖aigen handt/ vndterschriben hab. 6^{b} blank.

10. Epithalamion in Lutheri connubium.

163 mm. × 109 mm. 4 leaves, the last blank. No signatures but leaves two and three numbered.

1ª TITLE: Epithalamion || in nuntiatum Lutheri || connubium. || Cascus Cascam duxit. || Apud inclytam Vdenopolim ad fon- || teis Nili quadragesimo quinto Iulij. 1ᵇ: Hymnus paranymphorum. 2ª: Epithalamion Lutheri [poem in hexameters, 80 lines]. 3ᵇ END: τέλος || Impressum in ædibus Oenophori Bromij, || Anno domini Millesimo quingente- || simo uigesimo quinto.

For facsimile of title-page see Publications of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society, vol. XII., plate XI.

I am deeply indebted to Mr Frank C. Nicholson, Librarian of the Edinburgh University Library, for his assistance in tracing out the facts given in the foregoing notes, and for checking the collations.

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cere. Nemo ẽ q̃ nesciat quin si vel paucos velim mẽses in aula Regis viuere quãtũlibet, sacerdotiorũ accumulaturũ sed ego huic ocio meo ex studiorũ laboribus oia posthabeo. Cantuariensis Epus totius Angliæ primas, ac regni huiꝰ Cancellarius, vir doctus & ꝓbus me sic amplectit, vt si pr̃ eẽt aut frater nõ posset amantius. Et vt intelligas hoc eũ ex aio facere, dedit mihi sacerdotiũ cẽtũ fermè nobiliũ. Qd̃ postea volẽte me ĩ pẽsionẽ centũ coronatorũ mutauit ex mea resignacione. Ad hæc dedit dono supra quadringentos nobiles, his pauculis annis, idq; nihil vnq̃ petenti. Dedit vno die nobiles cẽtũ et quinquaginta, ab Epis alijs supra cẽtũ nobiles accepi grauita liberalitate oblatos D. Montioius huiꝰ regni Baro, quõdã meꝰ discipulꝰ, dat annuè mihi pensionẽ centũ coronatorũ. Rex et Epus Lin conieñ, q nũc p regẽ oia põt, magnifice mlta ꝓmittũt. Sũt hic duæ vniuersitates, quarũ vtraq; ambit hr̃e me, Oxonia & Cantabrigia. Nã Cantabrigie menses cõplures docui græcas & sacras lr̃as, idq; gratis, itaq; sp facere decretũ est. Sunt hic collegia, in quibꝰ tm̃ est religiõis, tãta vitæ modestia, vt nullã religionẽ sis prę hac nõ cõtẽptuꝰ si videas. Est Londini D. Iohãnes Coletꝰ D. Pauli decanꝰ, vir qui summã doctrinã cũ admirabili pietate collocauit, magnæ apud oẽs autoritatis. Is me sic amat, id q̃d sciũt oẽs, vt cũ nemine, q̃ mecũ viuat libentius, vt omittã alios innũeros ne sim bis molestus iactantia & loquacitate. Iã vt de operibꝰ meis dicã aliq̃. Enchiridion opinor te legisse, quo nõ pauci fatenr̃ sese ad pietatis studiũ inflãmatos, nihil mihi arrogo, sed gratulor CHRISTO. Adagiorũ opꝰ ab Aldo impressũ, an videris nescio, Est qdẽ ꝓphanũ sed ad omnẽ doctrinã vtilissime. Mihi certe inestimabilibus cõstitit laborib. ac vigilijs. Edidi opus de rerũ & verborũ copia, quod inscripsi Coleto meo, opus vtilissimũ cõcionatoribus, At ista cõtemnunt ij, qui oẽs bonas cõtẽnunt literas. His duobus annis præter alia multa castigaui Hieronymi Epistolas, adulteria & subdolitia obelis iugulaui. Ex græcorũ & antiq̃orũ codicũ collatiõe castigaui totũ Nouũ Testamẽtũ, ac sup̃ mille loca annotaui nõ sine fructu Theologorum. Cõmentarios in Epistolas Pauli incœpi, quos

Edin. Bibliographical Society.—Plate No. I.

Edin. Bibliographical Society.—Plate No. III.

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